

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3146

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BG
SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SECOND WEEK;
DISSENSION IN OSMANI CAMP

REF: DACCA 2983

1. SUMMARY: THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN HAS GENERATED
LITTLE PUBLIC ENTHUSIASM AS PRESIDENT ZIA KEEPS
OSMANI ON THE DEFENSIVE ABOUT THE LATTER'S AWAMI LEAGUE SUPPORT.
MEANTIME, OSMANI IS HAVING TROUBLE WRESTING SPEAKING
TIME FROM HIS AWAMI LEAGUE "SUPPORTERS." NO SUB-
STANTIVE ISSUES HAVE BEEN RAISED AND NO VIOLENCE HAS
YET BEEN REPORTED. THE ELECTION COMMISSION HAS
EXTENDED EQUAL MEDIA AND TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES
TO ALL CANDIDATES, A MOVE THAT PROBABLY REFLECTS
ZIA'S CONFIDENCE IN THE OUTCOME OF THE CAMPAIGN. END
SUMMARY.

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2. THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN HAS QUICKLY FALLEN INTO
A PATTERN OF SPEECH-MAKING AND PUBLIC MEETINGS ATTENDED
BY FAIRLY LARGE CROWDS THAT DISPERSE QUICKLY WITHOUT
BEING PARTICULARLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ANY CANDIDATE.
PRESIDENT ZIA CONTINUES TO TOUR THE COUNTRYSIDE,
STOPPING A DOZEN OR MORE TIMES A DAY TO

ADDRESS "SPONTANEOUS" RALLIES. GENERAL OSMANI KEEPS A SIMILAR THOUGH SOMEWHAT REDUCED SCHEDULE, BUT HIS PERSONAL ATTEMPTS TO CAMPAIGN HAVE BEEN HAMPERED CONSIDERABLY BY HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH MANY DOMINEERING AWAMI LEAGUE LEADERS WHO CAMPAIGN ALMOST AS THOUGH THEY WERE THE ACTUAL CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION.

3. OSMANI'S STRAINED RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS AWAMI LEAGUE COLLEAGUES (REFTEL) BECAME MORE OBVIOUS LATE LAST WEEK WHEN OSMANI PROTESTED TO THE AL ORGANIZERS NOT TO RATION HIS TIME. AS HE SAID, "I HAVE MANY THINGS TO SAY BUT I HAVE BEEN ALLOWED NO TIME*" THE USUAL PATTERN AT A GOJ FRONT RALLY IS TO HAVE FIFTEEN OR MORE SPEAKERS WITH OSMANI SANDWICHED IN THE MIDDLE TRYING TO COMPETE WITH SUCH EXPERIENCED HARANGUERS AS AWAMI LEAGUERS ABDUR RAZZAK, KORBAN ALI, MIZANUR RAHMAN CHOUDHURY AND MONI SINGH, THE OLD COMMUNIST LEADER. HOLIDAY, THE LEFTIST WEEKLY OF OPINION, OBSERVED WRYLY THAT IT WAS A SAN COMMENTARY ON THOSE WHO HAD PUT UP OSMANI FOR THE INTENTION OF RESTORING DEMOCRACY: "THE GOJ OPERATORS ARE CURTAILING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH OF THEIR OWN NOMINEE*"

4. WE ARE TOLD, IN FACT, THAT THE AWAMI LEAGUE MAY HAVE AGREED ON OSMANI AS THEIR FRONT CANDIDATE, KNOWING ALL THE WHILE THAT ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE, NEITHER THIER CANDIDATES NOR ANY OTHER COULD SERIOUSLY CHALLENGE ZIA. CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, OSMANI'S CANDIDATURE WOULD GIVE THE AWAMI LEAGUE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITY TO ORGANIZE AND HOLD PUBLIC RALLIES, AND WHEN OSMANI, TRADITIONALLY KNOWN IN THE PUBLIC MIND AS AN INDEPENDENT, IS DEFEATED, IT WILL BE HIS PERSONAL FAILURE RATHER THAN THAT OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE. OSMANI HIMSELF MAY HAVE ENCOURAGED THIS STRATEGY YESTERDAY WHEN HE TOLD A PUBLIC MEETING IN MYMENSINGH THAT IN THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION THE COMPONENT PARTIES OF THE GOJ FRONT WOULD GO TO THE PEOPLE WITH THEIR ESPECTIVE MANIFESTOES.

5. VIRTUALLY NO SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES HAVE YET EMERGED IN THE CAMPAIGN. RATHER, ZIA CONTINUES TO WARN THE PEOPLE IN SHRILL TONES OF THE DANGERS OF BRINGING THE BAKSALITES BACK TO POWER. OSMANI AS WELL AS THE AWAMI LEAGUE SOMEWHAT LAMELY TRY TO DEFEND THEIR INTENTIONS, AS OSMANI ATTEMPTED IN MYMENSINGH WHEN HE SAID THAT MANY PEOPLE THINK THAT BY VOTING IN FAVOR OF THE BOAT (THE TRADITIONAL AWAMI LEAGUE VOTING SYMBOL), THEY WOULD PUT THE LEAGUE BACK INTO POWER. THIS IS A WRONG CONCEPTION, HE SAID, "YOU ARE NOT PUTTING ANYBODY TO POWER; YOU ARE ONLY VOTING TO GET BACK YOUR RIGHTS."

6. NEITHER OSMANI NOR ZIA HAVE BEEN ABLE YET TO WHIP UP MUCH ENTHUSIASM FOR THE CAMPAIGN. JUDGING FROM A SHORT TRIP RECENTLY BY POLOFF TO BARISAL AND PAUTWAKHALI DISTRICTS, THE FEELING THERE AS WELL AS IN DACCA IS THAT THE ELECTION IS A HASTY AND SOMEHOW CONTRIVED AFFAIR. STILL, OBSERVERS ARE A BIT SURPRISED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO POLITICALLY-ORGANIZED PROCESSIONS (OFFICIALLY BANNED UNDER MARTIAL LAW) AND NO VIOLENCE.

7. APPARENTLY TO GIVE THE CAMPAIGN ADDITIONAL PROPRIETY, THE ELECTION COMMISSION ANNOUNCED MAY 17 THAT HENCEFORTH ADEQUATE RADIO AND TV COVERAGE WILL BE EXTENDED TO EACH CANDIDATE ANBP THAT EACH WILL BE ALLOWED FREE RAIL AND AIR PASSAGE, ACCOMMODATIONS, VEHICLE WITH DRIVER AND CONFIDENTIAL

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TELEPHONE SERVICE. SUCH GENEROSITY IS PROBABLY AS GOOD A SIGN AS ANY THAT ZIA IS CONFIDENT OF HIS POPULARITY AND DOES NOT FEAR THE COMPETITION.
SCHNEIDER

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